

gilt and jewels. The wily merchants accepted all these kindnesses 439
in the hope of extracting great profits from their packet (1). 175*

1. Cf. Cabaton, op. cit. /Le Laos et les Neerlandais au
dix-septieme siecle (1913). /

The audience took place near the pyramid of That-Luong which
was entirely covered with gold plate. The king, surrounded by all
his court, stood in a great temple and had the newcomers sit on
mats under the gallery. The following day dances, combats and /574/
water jousts were given in their honor on the river bank. Souliga-
Vongsa was present, carried on a golden chair, and came and sat on
a /108/ balcony erected over the river. In the evening more than
two hundred fiery pirogues went down the Mekong. "The river
seemed to be on fire: "

As time passed the merchandise sold well, thanks to the gifts
distributed to the king, the princes, the princesses and the officers.
The Dutch cleverly disparaged the Siamese of Ayuthya as traders of
little faith, offered to settle a misunderstanding which had arisen
between the sovereigns of Lan-Xang and Cambodia, and obtained
the Laotians' promise to deliver them enormous quantities of benzoin
and gum lac. They finally left on December 24, "profoundly im-
pressed with the wealth and splendor" of the kingdom of Vientiane (1).

1. Van Wusthof left without his two assistants, whom he
left with the king to await the gifts destined for Van Diemen
and the Laotian "ambassador" who was to accompany them.
(Francis Garnier, Bulletin de la Societe de geographie,
1871.)

If we are to believe Van Wusthof, this city then had a huge 174
population, while Luang-Prabang was nothing more than a deserted 164
city. A terrible cholera epidemic had decimated its population, 369
and those who were left had come to life in Vientiane.

He also confirms the kingdom's frontiers as stated by the Annals
and the perfect relations which /109/ Lan-Xang maintained with
all its neighbors.

On the other hand he does not shed any light -- rather the con- 439
trary -- on the obscure period which preceded Souliga's accession 643*
to the throne. Indeed he writes with perfect serenity: "the present 175*
king inherited the crown three years ago from his brother, who died

been the vassal of Annam and used to pay a triennial tribute. 643*
The Tayson revolt forced it to submit to the Siamese, 648*
who are mistreating the people. Today, seeing the glory 175*
and power of Emperor Gia-Long, the prince of Vientiane
asks to serve Annam once again and to pay tribute as in the
past. The embassy was received in a solemn audience by
Gia-Long, who questioned it at length on the administration
of the country, and was sent back, after a month's stay,
with magnificent gifts. . . . The ambassadors brought back
to the prince of Vientiane a letter from Gia-Long conceived
in the following terms: 'Your predecessor Chao-In was my
vassal, and my policy with respect to your kingdom has al-
ways been marked by gentleness and goodwill. Remain
faithful to your duty and show yourself ever humane towards
your people, and you will thereby comply with my wishes.'
The question of tribute was settled. It was to be paid every
three years, and the time of payment set in such a way that
the embassy responsible for bringing it might greet the king
during the holiday of the Tet." (Cf. Annals of the court of
Hue.)

to /161/ detach Luang-Prabang from Bangkok (1). After the Bassac

1. See below, p. 201.

campaign he had sent Chao-Ngo to fortify Oubone. A triple-en-
trenched camp was built there and recruits trained, supposedly to
defend Siam against any attack from inside or outside.

In Vientiane, he governed in the midst of a brilliant court. 369
The city of Setthathirath and Soulligna, although fallen from its 175
former splendor, still contained more than ten thousand families
and prided itself on its royal /162/ palace (1) and its many pagodas

1. When the Doudart de Lagree mission visited the city in /172/
1867 the mass of its fallen stones stretched from the Prakeo
to the ruins -- which were then still imposing -- of the
Wat-Kang. (De Carne, op. cit. /Voyage en Indochine et
dans l'empire chinois. Paris, 1872./) See above, p. 122,
the account by Father Marini.

whose gilt glittered above the walls of its fortifications. In 1818 /346/

115: Le Boulanger--103 H-4 (no date) 1931
(1700-1887)

AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

369 Anou had built the new temple of Sisaket not far from the deconsecrated
175 Prakeo "with the purpose of attracting the grace of Heaven
/346/ to the souls of his parents as well as to those of all his relatives and
to all the souls which people Hell and the world" (2). The corner-

2. Cf. inscription on the stele.

stone was laid on "Thursday, the ninth day of the waxing moon of the year Kap-San" (1824), in the midst of a large assembly of the populace.

778 Inauguration of the temple of Sisaket (1824). On this occasion
796 the king made innumerable gifts to the bonzes (clothing, sandals,
346 fans, iron pen points to write on latania leaves, mats, mattresses,
175* copper betel services, rice baskets, vases, metal drinking cups, carafes, goblets, etc.). He gave /163/ pieces of cloth to the poor, and generous bounties to artisans and musicians. The people walked in procession around the royal palace, carrying oriflammes and effigies of animals which were flowered and perfumed with incense. The holiday lasted three days, to the accompaniment of general rejoicing (1).

1. Ibid. /Inscription on the stele. /

346 This temple was the only one which the French found still standing when they reached Vientiane. Of the first enclosure there remain two 'thats', which have recently been restored, and an elegant square pavilion-library whose quadruple pinnacled roof is supported by a graceful colonnade. Three other pavilions have disappeared (2).

2. A bath pavilion, one for worship and one for the tom-toms and gongs.

/532/ A cloister pierced by a porch on each side surrounds the central sanctuary, the outer gallery of which discloses a gateway and finely worked windows under the triple porch roofs. The inside walls are illuminated by frescoes surmounted by many niches in the form of lotus leaves where thousands of statuettes are grouped in pairs. A wooden ceiling is embellished with gilded panels, and on the altar stands a giant Buddha entirely covered with gold leaf.

648* A few weeks later his eldest son Kham-Souk was given permission to
175* return to his own land and left with a small armed force led by
Louang Datzakorn, which preceded the Phya Surrissak's new army as
an advance guard.

At the end of November Pavie was back in Luang-Prabang, and
while he awaited news of the advance of the Pernot column which
had left Lao-kay in the direction of Lai and Theng he settled temporarily
with the Satou of the Wat-Mai. There he effortlessly resumed his close
relations with the "good inhabitants" who all knew him and showed "so
clearly that they thought him at home in the bonzery that one might have
thought he had been living there for years." The "enchanted city" was
born again out of its ashes, entirely new houses arose out of the debris,
the market took shape again and the girls who sold their wares there
came back /274/ each day in greater numbers -- Laotian and Lu women
from the country, timid Kha women from the nearby forest and girls from
Luang-Prabang whom Pavie could identify by "the ease of their gestures
and attitude, by their greater flexibility and distinction, by their
sweet and familiar civility and by their coquettishness with its
ingenuous charm." This "lovable people" began to live again in the
aftermath of its misfortune with a rare carefreeness, as if it were
unconscious of the present's uncertainties and in spite of the future's
threats. "And each evening, by the light of the stars, troops of
decisive young women and turbulent and laughing girls assembled in
various spots and followed the khene players, singing until dawn..."

648* Although capable of appreciating all the poetry of this carefree
175* revival, Pavie was nonetheless anxious to set out and at long last
make contact with the cantons of the highlands. He soon grew impatient
at not receiving any precise information concerning the advance of the
columns, of which he knew only that Colonel Pernot's forces had been
concentrated in Phong-Tho and that the Oudri detachment had set out
in the direction of Son-La. Moreover, the unusual length of time which
Bangkok was taking to send him the three promised "commissioners" rightly
made him suspect secret maneuvers on the part /275/ of the Siamese agents
who had remained in the Twelve Cantons after the withdrawal of the
Chao-Meun's expeditionary force.